

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

Benzodiazepine Action Work Group Meeting Minutes

March 5, 2024 via Zoom

Present:

Gail Dawson, NP and Madison Zang, Co-Chairs
Steve Wright, MD, Alexis Ritvo, MD, D.E. Foster, Lisa Leibe Gemmill, Marjorie DeWert, Barbara Connolly, Bernie Silvernail, Valsava Madhava, MD, Teresa Cobleigh, April Wise, J.C. Curle, Jess Angleson, Nicole Lamberson, Michael Bohan, MD, Terri Schreiber, Kath Bates, April Wise, Barry Cochran, RN, Nicolette Perrin, MP, Donald Thigpen, Jackie O'Hara
Consortium: Gina Olberding, Shayna Micucci, Jen Place, Kristin Carpenter, Eric Barker, Teresa Cantwell,

Absent: See attached roster.

Program Manager Shayna Micucci called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the February 2024 meeting minutes. Motion approved.

Co-chair Transition:

Shayna Micucci introduced Gail Dawson and Madison Zang, new work group co-chairs. She asked them to provide a brief history of their backgrounds. Gail Dawson is a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner who has practiced for 14 years, primarily in Colorado. She has a DEA license in the State of Washington. Co-Chair Madison Zang has lived experience. She was prescribed benzodiazepines for anxiety at the age of eighteen before stopping abruptly three years later and suffering side effects. She is currently the Substance Use Response Coordinator at Rocky Mountain Crisis Partners. Shayna Micucci thanked outgoing co-chairs Alexis Ritvo and D.E. Foster for their work. Both Alexis and D will continue as members of the work group.

Peer Support Training Updates (Colorado and National):

The peer support training has been very well received, with full attendance for most classes. Shayna asked meeting participants to share class information with their respective networks. A Massachusetts organization recently requested a class for their staff. Another Colorado class is planned for the month of June; other national classes are in the planning stages.

National class: March 12th and 19th from 9 to 4:30 p.m. (MT) on Zoom. This class is available for anyone to attend. For more information: www.benzopeertraining.org

To register: <https://choicesrecoverytrainings.com/product/recovering-from-benzodiazepine-use-for-peer-specialists/>

Colorado class: April 23rd and 30th from 9 to 4:30 p.m. (MT) on Zoom. For more information: www.benzopeertraining.org

To register:

https://choicesrecoverytrainings.com/product/recovering-from-benzodiazepine-use-for-peer-specialistscolorado/?fbclid=IwAR2a9XeAKiZnLapODrrb4O7pifle_1T7KBQ8DZqULFu0bwnKCeUteVddNU

Gina Olberding mentioned that, while the work group can provide technical assistance and referrals for other states, funding for classes is intended for entities within the State of Colorado. For more information regarding assistance and referrals: Shayna.micucci@cuanschultz.edu

Provider Education/CMEs – Jet Marketing Presentation (Jackie O’Hara):

Jackie provided an overview of the provider education marketing program. Presentation highlights:

- The program is Colorado focused and has included traditional advertising such as print ads, direct mail, and collaboration with other groups within the state.
- The Google pay per click campaign has resulted in the best response.
- From May of 2022 through the end of 2023 (seven quarters), there were 12.7 million ad impressions with 103,000 clicks.
- 10,000 courses will be completed by the end of April.
- Jet is building an email list from past course participants (currently 4,000 providers).
- Another email blast is planned for some time in March.

Benzodiazepine modules: <https://corxconsortium.org/resources/cme/>

For additional information or questions regarding classes and the Jet campaign: Shayna.micucci@cuanschultz.edu

Resource Manual:

Shayna mentioned that the Consortium has been receiving a lot of emails from individuals struggling with benzodiazepine issues who are seeking support. A resource reference is being planned and will be posted on the work group webpage.

Member Updates:

Bernie Silvernail reported on the email chain he started about the Ed Silverman Survey Project and the pros and cons of engaging with the project. The emails were followed by a Zoom meeting that included Ed, Steve Wright, Alexis Ritvo, Terri Schreiber, and Will Swan (professor with the University of Nebraska). It was decided to proceed with at least providing survey feedback to Ed.

Steve Wright said the International Task Force on Benzodiazepines holds a largely contrary opinion, in that they believe benzodiazepines have been inappropriately discredited. This view is likely based on lack of knowledge. He said that participating in Silverman’s project could present a great opportunity and that Silverman appears to be open to current research in this area.

Work group members, including Nicole Lamberson, discussed the importance of non-biased data interpretation and past Silverman bias referencing that patients’ issues are related to underlying personality disorders. Steve said he had the same concern. In his review of the survey, he saw an there was an attempt to pose balanced questions; however, there was a lack questions that would have indicated a deeper knowledge. Steve said his review of the International Task Force’s publications has shown that their conclusions are similar to the work

group's conclusions in terms of antidepressants; however, their investigations into benzodiazepines were not as thorough.

Barbara Connolly said she shared some of Nicole's concerns and would like to help by providing input on the survey research design.

J.C. Curle also agreed with the above-mentioned concerns and said she could provide survey feedback. She is troubled by the "old school" thinking and continuation of biased notions regarding benzodiazepine use. She cautioned that the benzo community should be made aware of the survey authors and their opinions about underlying personality disorders.

Bernie asked work group members to email him if they would like to review the survey questions: bernie@benzoreform.org

Nicole Lamberson, Alexis Ritvo, and Jeff Gold participated in a Canadian documentary related to benzodiazepines. The documentary is in French. An English version will be released shortly. French version: <https://youtu.be/cJcNIEH0rPc?si=jWt0PntCOCbPOYsz>
English sub-titles can be added.

Nicole is a member of the FDA's patient panel involved in developing benzodiazepine prescribing guidelines. A draft of the guidelines will be available shortly.

Kath Bates is going to be interviewed as a benzo survivor by Dr. Joseph.

Teresa Cobleigh said her research project is on hold and may not materialize. She spoke about the consequences of losing her son to abrupt benzodiazepine withdrawal and asked members to contact her if they are interested in assisting her with the issue of polysubstance use. teresa@herrenproject.org Bernie asked Teresa to send him her proposal. bernie@benzoreform.org Kath Bates is also interested in helping with the project. kathbates@hotmail.com

Other Business:

Barb Connolly asked about a provider who could help an individual with akathisia who is located in New York State. Several providers were suggested.

Steve Wright said a paper is being published by eClinical Medicine about a scoping survey of current guidelines. Jaden Brandt is the lead author.

The work group is planning to display a BIND poster (Benzodiazepine-Induced Neurological Dysfunction) at the upcoming Rx Summit in April. A proposal has also been submitted to the upcoming Faces & Voices Conference (recovery focused).

Adjournment/Next Meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 from Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Attachments: Work group roster